Kawaii Friend or Mythical Beast. Dragons and Other Animals in the Art of Takano Aya

In representation, animals become a mirror of us; they are what we want them to be, a projection of human desire¹.

Jeanne Dubino

Five colorful dragons and a nude girl are the characters depicted in Takano Aya's (タカノ綾, born in Saitama, 1976,)² painting titled *Rising Dragon (Rainbow)* with Lucky Omens (2015). In line with the Japanese tradition, the mythological beasts in the painting have serpentine, scaled bodies, deer-horns and long tendrils. The girl who accompanies them has red and pink flowers in her hair: red poppies (hinageshi) and/or hollyhocks, and also a hanamusubi – Japanese lucky flower knot. Apart from the dragon, there is yet one more mythical creature in the painting – a crane. It appears in the silhouette of the girl's hairpin and also as a decorative motif on her fan, which she is holding in her hand. Both, the flowers and the animals, have many archetypes in Japanese art. What, however, is their function in Takano's work? Is the way they are depicted consistent with their representations known from ancient-art? If no, than how are they different? How do they fit in with contemporary culture and artistic activity? To answer these questions it is worthwhile to first analyze Takano's work in the context of the 'Superflat' movement and the aesthetics of kawaii, and then to look at the artist's attitude to animals and the manner in which they are depicted in her earlier works, and finally to evaluate her paintings with other works of contemporary Japanese artists.

¹ Jeanne Dubino 2014: 14.

² Takano Aya – born on 22 December 1976 in Saitama. In 2000 she received a bachelor's degree from Tama Art University in Tokyo, and, soon after, started work with KaiKai Kiki Co. as an assistant to Murakami. She cooperates with the French Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin where, as part of her activity, she has had several exhibitions, i.a. 'Toward Eternity' in 2008 and 'To Lose Is To Gain' in 2015.

Flat and cute – contexts for Takano Aya's work

'Superflat (super flat)' is a style in contemporary Japanese art created by Murakami Takashi (村上隆, born in Tokyo, 1963), which is also referred to as Japanese neo-pop³ or 'micro-pop'⁴. According to Azuma Hiroki, an art critic, it originated from both, the pre-modern artistic tradition (painting and print, especially woodcuts – M.F-K) and post-modern products connected with *otaku*⁵ subculture. 'Superflat' stands for a rejection of the Western perspective in favor of flat surfaces and comic drawing. The movement shows a distinct lack of hierarchy between different forms of art, and even gives equal value to fine arts and the products of mass culture⁶. The subject matter is drawn mostly from pop culture, and the characters are simulacra⁷ of characters from manga and anime, computer games and science-fiction films.

In his essay titled 'Japonia wobec współczesności sztuki' (Japan and the modernity of art) Sawaragi Noi, known for his critical approach to this art movement, states that:

Japanese art is now hanging in a strange direction, retaining the loss of its ground caused by the reality of Japanese society. In the field of transformation, such causes as interiority, beauty, faith, despair, history and criticism that maintained contemporary art in the twentieth century have evaporated, replaced by the thin, flat and shallow reality⁸.

In 2001, in order to popularize the new art movement he himself invented, Murakami Takashi established Kaikai Kiki Co.⁹, a manufacturing and trading company. Among the employees were Takano Aya and Aoshima Chiho (青島千穂, born in Tokyo, 1974). The work of these two artists is often put together and presented together at exhibitions¹⁰. They both use *kawaii*¹¹ aesthetics, originally derived from

³ For further reference see: Favell 2011: 19.

⁴ Ibid.: 32.

⁵ *Otaku* – a fan of manga, anime and computer games based on their subject matter or made in the same style. Further reference: Azuma 2009.

⁶ For more see: Sawaragi 2000: 83-85.

⁷ Simulacrum – a copy without an original, a copy of a copy, which is a copy itself. Term introduced by Jean Baudrillard in 1981. For more see: Baudrillard 2005.

⁸ Sawaragi 2000: 167.

⁹ More on the company, its assumptions and female artists employed on the official website of Kaikai Kiki: http://english.kaikaikiki.co.jp [Accessed 16 July 2013].

¹⁰ The Works of the two artists were exhibited together at such exhibitions as: 'Tokyo Girls Bravo' (1999), 'T-Junction' (2004), 'Little Boy. The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture' (2005) or 'Chiho Oashima – Mr. – Aya Takano' (2007).

¹¹ For more information on the use of *kawaii* aesthetics in contemporary art see chapter 5 *Kawaii – współczesna estetyka japońska* [kawaii – contemporary Japanese aesthetics], in: Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska 2015: 97-136.

the 'cute' handwriting style of young girls which later got transformed into a fashion¹², and then into a behavior pattern of young Japanese women, both teenage and thirty-something, mostly single. In their understanding, *kawaii* stands for anything that is childlike, sweet, innocent, charming, delightful, frail, weak and inexperienced¹³, 'infantile and delicate, but at the same time pretty'¹⁴. Through this style young Japanese women express their fear of losing freedom and youth¹⁵. Because of their immature, 'cute' behavior they are marginalized by society, who associate them with everything that is exotic, decadent, connected with consumption and having fun¹⁶. Such an attitude to Japanese art, being also their own, is manifested in the works of the two artists.

Another common feature of Takano and Aoshima's works is that in both cases the main characters in their paintings and other works are women, both, goddesses and *kami* of the Japanese pantheon, and contemporary Japanese women. According to Adrian Favel the girls from their works are 'ideal objects of *otaku* male fantasies' 17. This is how he explains his point:

The work of these two artists was full of the delicate and pretty iconography of teenage girl's bedroom, and typical of "Micropop". They picture cartoon girls self-absorbed in adolescent sci-fi and dreams of a future paradise. It was mixed in with androgynous romance, naive sexuality, and full of images of injured doll girls and submission fantasies. It was sweet, colorful, girly – but a little disturbing¹⁸.

The diptych *Yuyake-chan Miss Sunset* (2006) can serve as an example of Aoshima Chiho's work depicting ephemeral little goodness like Apsaras. The prints show *kami*, which are presented as slender girls with big, colorful eyes. One of them is the moon *usagi* accompanied by her small white brothers and sisters. Another cycle by the artist, titled *Japanese Apricot* (2007), which relates also to the changes of time during the day, has a decidedly more erotic overtone. Here, the girls are depicted as the eponymous fruit hanging from a tree. Bound with ropes, consistent with the *kinbaku* tradition, they are an ideal object for consumption. Murakami Takashi also depicts comic book Lolitas¹⁹, – Japanese *lolicon* (*lolikon*, *rorikon*) in an erotic way, as can be seen in the example of sculptures such as: *Hiropon* (1996) and *Miss Ko2* (1997), which present young girls with overgrown breasts. Also MR. (born

¹² For more information on *kawaii* style apparel see: Kinsella 1995: 228-230.

¹³ Compare Hasagawa 2002: 127-141 [p. 128].

¹⁴ Compare Kazuma 1986.

¹⁵ Sharon Kinsella: 245.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 242.

¹⁷ Adrian Favell: 33.

¹⁸ Ibid.: 33.

¹⁹ For more information on *lolicon* see: Favell: 35.

in Cupa, 1969,), another Kaikai Kiki Co. artist, depicts young women in a similar fashion. It is perfectly visible in his large-scale acrylic works like, among others, *High School Story: Yeah!Yeah!* and *Shakotan☆Love♥: Virgin Blue* from 2013. His works are portraits of young girls, often wearing school uniforms, drawn in a style typical of *shōjo manga/anime*²⁰. Contrary to Murakami, however, his characters are not provocative and do not shock with eroticism, but are rather meant to be the essence of kawaii – cute and lovely.

Animals as cute sidekicks

In 2001 Kaikai Kiki Co. published Takano's art book titled *Hot Banana Fudge*²¹, which contains reproductions of the artist's paintings and drawings from 1997–2000 – the period of her studies at Tama Art University. That was the time when her style, which would later not only become characteristic of the artist's works, but also fit so well in the Superflat movement, started taking shape. The characters in the art book are young women with ephemeral bodies and huge eyes. The way in which they are depicted is a stylistic reference to manga/anime, but it is more similar to drawings of a child than those two styles. According to Jennifer Higgie it also brings to mind the depictions of virgins from the paintings of Quattro cento artists – thin, long limbed, small breasted, with long faces and empty eyes that are too big²². The lines of their silhouettes seem to be a bit clumsy, which is intentionally done by the artist in order to give her works even more *kawaii* features.

The characters in *Hot Banana Fudge* are mostly female astronauts or nude girls suspended in weightlessness. They are accompanied by small red fish, which can also serve as a weapon, as in the work *The Cosmic War* (1998). Most times they are, however, depicted as companions in solitude, as in 1999 acrylic works *Hotel Capsule Express* and *31852*. The publication also includes works that present other sea creatures, especially octopuses. Contrary to the fish, they are often aggressive towards the characters, as can be seen in *Fight with Tako* (1999). This acrylic work refers indirectly to a famous story of a fight between a lady pearl diver and a female envoy of Ryūjin, the master of the body of water and oceans, which was presented on multiple occasions by *ukiyo-e* masters including Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国芳, 1797-1861)²³. The conflict had a continuation in Takano's comic titled *Space Ship*

 $^{^{20}\,}$ More on $sh\bar{o}jo$ in: Shamoon 2008: 137-154; Malik 2008: 420.

²¹ Takano: 2001.

²² Compare Jennifer Higgie, ***, http://www.perrotin.com/text-Aya_Takano-15.html [Accessed 25 July 2013].

²³ For example the woodcut *Tamatori* (female ama diver), *Being Attacked by Octopus While Grabbing Sacred Jewel* (1845-1846).

EE²⁴ published in 2002, also by Murakami's artistic company. The representatives of a dangerous and untrustworthy cosmic race, the Pelurians, bear resemblance to octopuses. The main hero in the book is a 23 year-old woman, an employee of Hyoda Noshi Corporation, whose friend is a female black cat, Ninniku. The animal is carried, among other places, on her shoulders and does not desert her even in the face of danger. This animal is the archetype of animal companions present in Takano's later works from 2005–2009.

In 2005 the artist painted two works in which the main character is a poodle. The acrylic painting *Doggy Drive* shows the interior of a car, whose passengers are, among others, a half nude girl wearing red glasses, who is the driver, and a white poodle sitting next to her. The dog, its tongue out, seems to be enjoying the drive. In *Bus Trip in 2006* the animal is walking on its extraordinarily long legs next to its owner. In both works the dog is a cute travel companion. Cat friends, on the other hand, appear in many of Takano's works from 2009, like *Crane Island* and *Jump into a River*, and also *On the Hill, Beyond that Fence, She Leads an Army of Cats.* They are characteristically soft-shaped and have huge eyes. They are deliberately drawn in a clumsy manner, in order to make them *kawaii*.

The motif of a cute animal companion appears also in *Summoning Her Owls, She Looked Yonder. The Buildings Shone* (2007). The characters in this acrylic piece are accompanied by a couple of pets. One has on her shoulders a cat, which resembles Ninniku from *Space Ship EE* and also Luna from *Sailor Moon*²⁵. There is also a small owl flying in her direction. Adding to this, the girl is carrying a small fish tank with fish. Between her and the other character there is a small black dog running. The other girl is also carrying a cat and a bird on her shoulders. Both, the animals, and their big-eyed owners with their still childlike bodies are 'cute'. The pastel colors Tanako used make her paintings even more *kawaii*, but can also bring about associations with frescoes. They contribute to the oneiric aura, which is additionally intensified by the lightness of the characters who seem to be floating above the ground. 'I wanted to escape from all the gravity that restrains me. I wanted freedom...'²⁶ – said the artist. This is why her characters are levitating freely in space or water, oblivious to the reality around them. Half naked, liberated from the social and cultural rules.

²⁴ Takano: 2002.

²⁵ More on: http://sailormoon.channel.or.jp/chara/index.html [Accessed 25 July 2013].

²⁶ Miki Akiko.

Inspiration from local folklore and Asian religions

The manner of painting, which Takano has gradually honed starting from 2002, does not change in her cycle of works devoted to the Japanese ethnic minority group, the Ainu – a hunting-gathering people who presently live mostly on Hokkaido Island²⁷. The paintings *Honyuraf* (2009) and *From the Day, Aqua Blue Sky and Twinkling...* (2009)

(...) are inspired by the cultures of the Amami Oshima Islands off the coast of Southern Japan. (...) Takano's paintings depict images of figures, animals and sea creatures interacting together in a highly imaginative landscape. Her signature long-limbed young girls are still evident levitating in space and participating in ritualistic activities that are both erotic and utopian ²⁸.

The artist's iconographic sources of information on that remarkable culture were photographs of ritual masks, hair styles and tattoos as well as of people engaged in rituals or everyday activities, such as swimming, games and work in the open²⁹.

From the Day, Aqua Blue Sky and Twinkling... shows a swimming girl accompanied by a ray and other sea creatures, but also birds. It is thus impossible for the viewer to determine if the blue surrounding the girl is water or the sky. This ambiguity was intended by the artist, who wanted to give the work the air of peculiarity. The figure of the girl is also distinctive. Her naked body is covered with ornamental tattoos, the pattern of which is also on the ethnic shoes she is wearing. Despite the diagonal composition of the painting, it emanates the air of utopian calmness. Additionally the viewer is intrigued by the ambiguity of the situation. In *Honyuraf*, Takano achieved a similar effect. The painting comprises two canvases, with the gap between them dividing the main character of the scene in half. The character is a half nude girl, so typical of the artist's works. Her hips are covered by a wide waistband-skirt, richly decorated with the motifs of butterflies and water animals, and on her head she is wearing a fancy crown-bonnet. There is an orange bird sitting on her right arm. The figure brings to mind ancient statues of the goddesses of fertility with broad hips. On her left we can see youngsters playing in water, and on her right – two girls, one of whom is wearing her hair in a style characteristic of the Ainu and the other is kissing a young fawn. In the background one can see a cottage modeled on those in which Hokkaido inhabitants live. Again the artist

²⁷ More on the Ainu: Majewicz 1991.

²⁸ Description of the exhibition 'Reintegrating Worlds', which took place in Skarstedt Gallery in New York in 2009. For more see: http://www.skarstedt.com/exhibitions/2009-11-05_aya-takano [Accessed 24 July 2013].

²⁹ Compare http://www.skarstedt.com/exhibitions/2009-11-05_aya-takano [Accessed 24 July 2013].

introduces ambiguity. Are we looking at some sort of a ritual or an everyday life event of the Ainu? Additionally all the characters, including animals, are *kawaii*.

Blissful life in harmony with nature, in the company of animals between which there are no conflicts is the subject of a few works painted by the artist after 2012. These include, among others: All Life Can Live Together (2012) and May All Things Dissolve in the Ocean of Bliss (2014). The former of the two, in pastel colors, with a prevalence of light pink, depicts a nude girl with flowers in her hair surrounded by wild and domestic animals. There are predators: a lion, a polar bear, a white owl, but also herbivores and other meek animals – a llama, a panda bear, a flamingo, a humming bird, a chameleon. Not to mention a delightfully stretched cat and a white Maltese. Their bodies are tangled with the body of the girl – who is most likely a personification of some guardian deity from the rich Shinto pantheon. Such interpretation seems to be suggested by another work, which was made 2 years later – Edible Plant Garments, Guardian Deities (2014). In the center of that piece there is a young woman entangled in diverse plants: perennials, vegetables, fruit etc. She is, however, also accompanied by three animals emerging from between the leaves – a cat and a lion on her right side and an octopus with a sundew on her left side. Such a composition pattern, with a girl, her eyes directed at the viewer, in the center surrounded by bushy vegetation or a group of animals, recurs frequently in the artist's works, as can be seen in the paintings: Furyū Odori. Celebration 2 (2012), Rising, Floating Energy and Flowers (2013) and Venerable Fox (2014).

The painting titled May All Things Dissolve in the Ocean of Bliss, on the other hand, is a large scale panorama showing groups of people and animals bathing, both in the sea and in the sun. On the beach a lion is resting alongside a cow and a pig. A whale and a ray are emerging from the sea, and an octopus and an amoeba are resting on the body of one of the girls submerged in water. That last scene brings to mind the famous woodblock print by Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北 孫, 1760-1849) titled Tako to ama (The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife, Girl Diver and Octopuses or Diver and Two Octopuses, 1814), which belongs to the genre of shunga³⁰. The artist had already painted a girl and an octopus in such a situation before. An example of this can be the acrylic painting from 1999 titled The Paradise, or an even earlier drawing from the Bridge (1997) – both included in 'hot banana fudge'.

The blissful scene with a subtly erotic air created by Takano in *May All Things...* is only spoilt by smoke coming from the chimneys of the factories in the city in the background. The artist weaves a utopian vision in which people and animals can live in perfect harmony. It is consistent with the Hindu mythology, according to which the ocean of bliss is the eternal world of Vaikuntha (place of no hindrance) – home of Krishna. To enter Goloka, the planet of cows, where Vishnu lives, one

³⁰ For more information on *shunga* see: Screech 1999, Screech 2006.

has to forego the attachment to all things material. It is only possible after submersion in the ocean of bliss³¹.

In her works, the artist invokes female figures from different mythologies, including Hindu and Buddhist, but also vernacular folklore connected with Shinto. On the canvas of their stories she constructs their depictions, which connect iconographic motifs known from the monuments of culture with kawaii aesthetics. The acrylic painting Secrets of the Thousand Year Spiral: Gorōyama (2013) showing a nymph accompanied by a white horse and a pup against a backdrop of hieroglyphic images made on rock surface inspired by wall paintings discovered in 1947 in a tomb in Gorōyama in Fukuoka prefecture. Another example is the work titled *Nüwa* from 2014. The painting is a representation of the eponymous goddess who, according to Chinese mythology, is the creator of mankind, the sister and wife to Fuxi³². A woman with a serpentine, dragon-like or fish-like tail instead of legs. She is usually depicted in art together with her husband, their limbs entwined. The first images of the pair started appearing as tomb decorations (as paintings on banners, wall painting and reliefs) during the Han dynasty (206BCE – 220CE)³³. In Takano's painting Nüwa is depicted in a dancing pose accompanied by flowers (among others orchids, hollyhocks, thistle) and animals (an Akita dog, a sheep, a pig, a cow, a black horse and a tortoise). In the background in the left corner of the painting can be seen a marginalized male figure, probably Fuxi.

References to vernacular folklore, on the other hand, can be found in the acrylic painting *Venerable Fox* (2014), in which the artist painted a girl with a red fox tail and ears with lush hillside vegetation in the background. The character is holding ears of rice, which helps identify her either as Inari – the deity of fertility, rice and farming or as her fox herald, who, however, in iconography is depicted with white fur³⁴. The figure brings to mind the story of a young female fox who could assume human form³⁵ and her love of a man, illustrated, among others, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi in a woodblock print *Kuzunoha* (circa 1843-5) and, on the one hand, also young Japanese women, who wear headbands with cat, rabbit or fox ears in order to look cute.

³¹ Flood 1996: 78.

³² More on Nüwa (Nügua) and Fuxi: Eberhard 2007: 70-71, 175-176.

³³ Yang, Barnhart, Nie, Cahill, Lang, Wu: 28, Wetzel 2013: 159.

³⁴ More on the topic of the iconography of a fox as a herald of Inari in: Furmanik-Kowalska 2012: 199-214, Korpalska 2015.

³⁵ Foxes, like raccoon dogs belong to the *yōkai* – supernatural beings who can change their form. More in Ibidem.

How a mythical beast became a cute companion

In 2015 the artist produced four new paintings meant especially for Art Basel trade fairs in Hong Kong³⁶. Her works were presented at the Kaikai Kiki Co. stand and in the Perrotin gallery at the same time. At the former viewers could see the Rising Dragon (Rainbow) with Lucky Omens, which was described in the introduction to this article, and at the latter a very similar painting also showing a girl in the company of a dragon and a crane. On her thigh can be seen three drawings/tattoos, including one showing Nüwa and Fuxi with their tails entwined. Additionally in this series exhibited in Hong Kong, were two other works with identical composition and pastel tone, this time, however, the female characters' animal companions were tigers, cats and birds. Both, dragons and tigers³⁷, belonging to the mythical pantheon of beasts of great strength and power, are depicted here as if they were domesticated cats. They are staring at the viewer with their big eyes, smiling. The dragons look more like the friendly character from Hayao Miyazaki's animation Spirited Away, Haku, or the cult white companion from Never Ending Story from 1984 directed by Wolfgang Petersen, than the dangerous masters of sea depths, deities of waters and abundance.

Such a friendly attitude towards dragons was already heralded by a series of watercolors from 1999, which included the work titled *My Friend* presenting a scene of a conversation between a girl and a great dragon. The works from 2015, however, also carry a hidden erotic undertone. The characters are nude, staring at the viewer in evocative poses. They are ideal *lolicon*, like the figure in Aida Makoto's (会田 誠, b. 1965) *The Giant Member Fuji versus King Gidora*. The work shows a girl-giant knocked over by a dragon with many heads. Matsui Midori says:

The painting was a parody of a popular children's sci-fi flick, Ultraman, and Katsushika Hokusai's erotic ukiyo-e print. (...) Aida uses the classical design and framework in order to comment on the unchanging popular interest in pornography³⁸.

The reasons underlying the creation of Aida's and Takano's works were, however, different. While the former of the two artists is making an ironic comment on the erotic fancies of the contemporary Japanese, the latter amounts to an ide-

³⁸ Matsui 2002: 149-150.

³⁶ The artist put their photos on her blog: http://bananajuicecosmix.blogspot.com/2015/03/art-basel-hong-kong.html.

³⁷ The Tiger is one of the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac. Contrasted with the Dragon, it is a symbol of courage, it chases off demons. In Japanese art the pair – dragon and tiger – appears, among others, on screens, e.g. a pair of twofold screens by Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-1795) from 1781 in Detroit Institute of Arts and a triptych of hanging scrolls from 1787 by the same author titled *Wang Xixhi with a tiger and a dragon*, kept in Daijōji temple in Hyōgo prefecture. More: Sato 2010.

alized vision of the desires and fantasies of her generation. Innocent and charming goddesses tame dangerous beasts, and they become merry companions. In Takano's works animals become a mirror of the generation and social group to which the artist belongs. At the same time they are a perfect illustration of the attitude towards nature prevailing in Japan – its wild side should be tamed and turned into a 'cute friend'.

References

- Azuma Hiroki 2009. *Otaku. Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel, Shion Kono. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean 2005. *Symulakry i symulacja* [*Simulacra and Simulation*], translated by Sławomir Królak. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!.
- Dubino, Jeanne 2014. *Introduction*. In: Jeanne Dubino, Andrew Smyth (eds.) *Representing the Modern Animal in Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eberhard, Wolfram 2007. *Chińskie symbole. Słownik* [Chinese symbols. A dictionary], trans. Renata Darda. Kraków: Univeritas.
- Favell Adrian 2011. Before and After Superflat. A Short History of Japanese Contemporary Art 1990–2011. Hong Kong: Blue Kingfisher Limited.
- Flood, Gavin 1996. An Introduction to Hinduism. Cambridge: University Press.
- Furmanik-Kowalska, Magdalena 2012. "Ikonografia jenotów, lisów i innych japońskich demonów w filmie "Szopy w natarciu Pom Poko" Isao Takahaty [iconography of raccoon dogs, foxes and other Japanese demons in Isao Takahata's film 'Pom Poko']. In: Joanna Zaremba-Penk, Marcin Lisiecki (eds.) *Studio Ghibli. Miejsce filmu animowanego w japońskiej kulturze* [Ghibli Studio. The place of animated film in Japanese culture]. Toruń: Kirin.
- Furmanik-Kowalska, Magdalena 2015. *Uwikłane w kulturę. O twórczości współcze-snych artystek japońskich i chińskich* [culture trouble. The contemporary art of Japanese and Chinese women]. Bydgoszcz: Kirin.
- Hasegawa Yuko 2002. "Post-identity Kawaii. Commerce, Gender and Contemporary Japanese Art." In: Frank Lloyd (ed.) *Consuming Bodies. Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art.* London: Reaktion Books.
- Higgie, Jennifer, ***. http://www.perrotin.com/text-Aya_Takano-15.html [Accessed 25 July 2013].
- Kinsella, Sharon 1995. "Cuties in Japan". In: Women, Media and Consumption in Japan, Lise Skov, Brian Moeran (eds.). Oxford: Routledge, pp. 228-230.
- Korpalska, Anna 2015. *Lis w kulturze Japonii* [fox in Japanese culture]. Warszawa-Toruń: Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata & Wydawnictwo Tako.
- Majewicz, Alfred F. 1991. *Dzieje i wierzenia Ajnów* [history and beliefs of the Ainu]. Poznań: CIA Books-SVARO.

- Malik, Farah 2008. "Manga and Anime Fan Culture." In: Claudia Mitchell [&] Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (eds.) *Girl Culture. Studying Girl Culture. A Readers' Guide.* Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press.
- Matsui Midori 2002. "The Place of Marginal Positionality: Legacies of Japanese Anti-Modernity." In: Frank Lloyd (ed.) *Consuming Bodies. Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art.* London: Reaktion Books, pp. 149-150.
- Miki Akiko, *Toward Eternity*, http://www.perrotin.com/text-Aya_Takano-15.html [Accessed 25 July 2013].
- Sato Tomoko 2010. *Sztuka japońska* [Japanese art], trans. Joanna Kolczyńska. Warszawa: Arkady.
- Sato Tomoko 2008. Japanese Art. East Sussex: Ivy Press Ltd..
- Sawaragi Noi 2000. "Japonia wobec współczesności sztuki...[Japan and the modernity of art]." In: Maria Brewińska (ed.) *Gendai. Sztuka współczesna Japonii pomiędzy ciałem i przestrzenią* [gendai. Japanese contemporary art between the body and the space](exhibition catalogue). Warszawa: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, pp. 83-85.
- Screech, Timon 2006. *Erotyczne obrazy japońskie 1700-1820* [Japanese erotic pictures]. Kraków: Universitas.
- Screech, Timon 1999. Sex and Floating World. Erotic Images in Japan 1700-1820. London: Reaktion Books Ltd..
- Shamoon, Deborah 2008. "Situating the Shōjo in Shōjo Manga. Teenage Girls, Romance Comics, and Contemporary Japanese Culture." In: Mark Mac Williams (ed.) *Japanese Visual Culture. Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. Abibgdon: Routledge, pp. 137-154.
- Takano, Aya 2001. Hot Banana Fudge, Kaikai Kiki Co..
- Takano, Aya 2002. Space Ship EE, Kaikai Kiki Co..
- Wetzel, Alexandra 2013. *Chiny. Od ustanowienia cesarstwa do dynastii Ming* [China. From the establishment of the empire to the Ming dynasty]. Leksykon Cywilizacje [Lexicon Civilizations] series, trans. Maria & Ksenia Zawanowska. Warszawa: Arkady.
- Yamane Kazuma 1986. *Hentai shōjō moji no kenkyū* [anomalous teenage handwriting research]. Tōkyō: Kodansha.
- Yang Xin, Richard M. Barnhart, Nie Chongzheng, James Cahill, Lang Shaojun, Wu Hung 1997. *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Paintings*. New Haven & London, Beijing: Yale University Press and Foreign Languages Press.
- http://bananajuicecosmix.blogspot.com/2015/03/art-basel-hong-kong.html [Accessed 5 May 2017].
- http://english.kaikaikiki.co.jp [Accessed 16 July 2013].
- http://sailormoon.channel.or.jp/chara/index.html [Accessed 25 July 2013].
- http://www.skarstedt.com/exhibitions/2009-11-05_aya-takano [Accessed 24 July 2013].

English Summary of the Article

Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska

The aim of this article is to indicate the kinds of animals and their symbolic function in the works of the Japanese artist Takano Aya (b. 1976, Saitama). Her works may be interpreted as illustrative of the current attitude towards animals prevailing in contemporary Japanese society, especially its part that is deeply permeated by local pop culture. After all, her art fits into the Superflat movement and the girly aesthetics of *kawaii* at the same time. Takano's paintings are full of images of cute household pets: dogs, fish, cats and rabbits, which accompany the female characters in both everyday activities and extraordinary moments (*Doggy Drive*, 2005; *Summoning Her Owls, She Looked Yonder. The Buildings Shone*, 2007; *Crane Island*, 2009). In her paintings there are also mythological animals, which were so commonly represented in the ancient artwork of Japan. Takano depicts cranes, tigers and dragons (*Rising Dragon (Rainbow) with Lucky Omens*, 2015) in the same style as household pets.

Keywords: mythical animals, dragon, *kawaii*, contemporary art, paintings, manga, anime

論文概要

「可愛い友達あるいは神秘的野獣。タカノ綾の芸術作品における龍とその他の動物」

本論の目的は、日本のアーティストであるタカノ綾(1976年埼玉生まれ)の作品における、ある種の動物達と彼らの象徴的な役割を指摘することである。彼女の作品は、日本現代社会の中でも特にポップカルチャーに深く浸透している動物に対する姿勢を映し出していると解釈できる。そして彼女の芸術作品は、「カワイイ」少女的美学と同時にスーパーフラット・ムーブメントに合致する。タカノの絵画には、犬、魚、猫、そして兎など多くの可愛いペットのイメージが、女性のキャラクターと共に、日常的な活動や非日常的な瞬間の中に描かれる(Doggy Drive, 2005; The Buildings Shone, 2007; Crane Island, 2009)。彼女の絵画の中には、日本の古くから伝わる芸術に頻繁に見られる神話的な動物もまた現れる。鶴、虎、龍(Rising Dragon (Rainbow) with Lucky Omens, 2015)といった動物達はタカノによって、ペットと同様のスタイルで表現されているのである。

キーワード:神話的動物、龍、カワイイ、現代美術、絵画、マンガ、アニメ